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the WORLD ALLIANCE for INTERNATIONAL FRIENDSHIP THROUGH THE CHURCHES
the WORLD ALLIANCE of YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATIONS
the WORLD'S YOUNG WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION
the WORLD'S STUDENT CHRISTIAN FEDERATION
the WORLD COUNCIL OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

The aim of the Ecumenical Press Service is to keep its readers informed of trends of thought and opinion in and about the Churches and Christian movements. It is therefore not to be held responsible for opinions expressed in its news items.

No. 51

Fifteenth Year

December 24, 1948

Christmas Greetings

The following letter has been sent to the Member Churches of the World Council of Churches by its General Secretary, Dr W.A. Visser 't Hooft;

"In this first Advent season since the World Council of Churches has been formed we would greet you with the words of Isaiah 60 (in the translation of George Adam Smith);

'Arise, shine, for come hath thy light, and the glory of Jehovah hath risen upon thee. For behold the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the peoples, but upon thee shall Jehovah arise, and His glory upon thee shall be seen. And nations shall come to thy light and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about and see, all of them have gathered, have come to thee; thy sons from afar are coming, and thy daughters are carried in the arms. Then thou shalt see and be radiant, and thy heart shall throb and grow large...'

"This wonderful picture of Israel turning its face toward the first rays of the light which shines in the darkness reveals the true situation of the Church of Christ. That Church lives in a world of darkness. As members of a fellowship of Churches several of which are at present engaged in a life and death battle with powerful anti-Christian forces, and as members of a world-wide fellowship which is constantly up against the man-made walls of separation, we are constantly reminded of that terrible truth.

"But the voice says; 'Come hath thy light - lift up thine eyes'. In the midst of the darkness there is the brightness of Christmas. There is the flood of light which announces the coming dawn. There is a place - the Church - where this light is received and reflected. And in that place men and women from all the ends of the earth gather. Thus they were gathered at Amsterdam. That is the *raison d'être* of the World Council.

"When the scattered children of God meet in the circle of light, they will 'see'. That is, they will see that God's plan is being fulfilled in the midst

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No. 21

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The following letter has been sent to the Member Churches of the World Council of Churches by its General Secretary, Dr. W.A. Visser 't Hooft:

"In this first Advent season since the World Council of Churches has been formed we would greet you with the words of Isaiah 60 (in the translation of George Adam Smith):

'Arise, arise, for come hath thy light, and the glory of Jehovah hath risen upon thee. For behold the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the peoples, but upon thee shall Jehovah arise, and His glory upon thee shall be seen. And nations shall come to thy light and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about and see: all of them have gathered, have come to thee: thy sons from afar are coming, and thy daughters are brought in the arms. Then thou shalt see and be radiant, and thy heart shall throw and grow large....'

"This wonderful picture of Israel turning its face toward the first rays of the light which shines in the darkness reveals the true situation of the Church of Christ. That Church lives in a world of darkness. As members of a fellowship of Churches several of which are at present engaged in a life and death battle with powerful anti-Christian forces, and as members of a world-wide fellowship which is constantly up against the one-way walls of separatism, we are constantly reminded of that terrible truth.

"But the voice says: 'Come hath thy light - lift up thine eyes'. In the midst of the darkness there is the brightness of Christmas. There is the flood of light which announces the coming dawn. There is a place - the Church - where this light is received and reflected. And in that place men and women from all the ends of the earth gather. Thus they were gathered at Amsterdam. That is the reason of the World Council.

"When the scattered children of God meet in the circle of light, they will see. That is, they will see that God's plan is being fulfilled in the midst

of the disorder of men. Let us therefore pray for each other that in spite of everything our Churches may celebrate this Christmas with radiant faces and with hearts which grow large."

E.P.S. Geneva

Week of Prayer for the Unity of Christendom

From January 18 to 25, Churches in many countries will be observing a Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. The Commission of Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches has taken the opportunity, this year also, to appeal to all those interested in its work for special prayers. "This year", writes the Rev. Oliver Tomkins, its Secretary, "the appeal comes out of a new setting which is full of promise for the healing of divided Christendom and yet a setting which also reminds us of barriers not yet surmounted and of threats to all that Christians value. On August 23, 1948, the World Council of Churches was constituted. Faith and Order took its place as one of the essential constituents of the new organ.

"Let us thank God for having led us thus far and pray for His continued blessing and guidance, especially for the Central Committee and staff of the Council and for the officers of our Commission, and their meetings in July, 1949.

"Let us pray that the Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council may be enabled to keep steadily before the Council, in all its aspects, the Divine command to unity in truth and love and may serve the Churches participating in the Council even more richly and fruitfully than before.

"There were no 'observers' from the Roman Catholic Church at Amsterdam, as there had been at Edinburgh and Lausanne, yet there are many evidences of close and sympathetic attention amongst Roman Catholics to the development of the Council.

"Let us pray that the Lord of the Church may guide aright those who seek each other across this deepest division of Christendom.

"At Amsterdam, the Orthodox Churches of Constantinople and Greece, and the Eastern Churches of Ethiopia and South India, played a full part, but a refusal of any cooperation with the Council 'in its present form' was received from the Patriarchate of Moscow and in the name of various other Orthodox Churches.

"Let us pray for deeper understanding between Eastern and Western Christians and for the removal of all barriers which prevent free and faithful Christian confrontation between us.

"The Amsterdam Assembly met at a time when the horrors of a world war were fresh in our minds and men's hearts fail them for fear of worse to come.

"Let us pray that, in such a time as this, God will renew and unite His Church, using the World Council, in all its aspects, to raise up Christians in every land to see their high calling and to walk worthy of their vocation."

E.P.S. Geneva

Rectification:- No. 50, page 328, 3rd § of news-item on Resettlement of Refugee Orphans, read "the United States Lutheran Committee" (not Brethren)

Will the Refugees Find a New Home?

Representatives from the Geneva Offices of ten large voluntary organisations active in refugee work broadcast on Friday December 17, a combined appeal entitled; Will the Refugees find a New Home? This continues a practice of recent years, whereby these organisations, which meet regularly for consultation, seek at Christmas to present the appeal for refugees on the broadest religious and humanitarian basis. The text which follows was briefly commented by each representative present;

"All over the earth, there are millions of human beings who have been driven from their homes and who survive as refugees, in misery and destitution. The International Refugee Organisation has taken over the responsibility for many categories of refugees; but the magnitude of the distress is such that the international organisations whose names appear below, concerned particularly with the human character of the refugee problem, and making no distinction of race, religion or political opinion, feel obliged to make an urgent appeal to the conscience of the world in order that this tragic situation may find a speedy solution.

"The old should be enabled to end their days in peace, the children and young people to prepare for the days ahead; families scattered by the War's upheavals and its aftermath, must be brought together; workers, whether manual or intellectual, should have the opportunity of placing themselves at the service of the community. The sick must be cared for, the hungry fed, and those who are cold, clothed. In hearts so cruelly torn by suffering, faith in the brotherhood of man and the possibility of a better future must be rekindled.

"This appeal is addressed to the countries through which refugees pass as well as to those in which they finally settle, in the hope that nothing will be left undone to assure to these refugees the asylum to which they are entitled and to facilitate their return to normal family life.

"We are convinced that it is the duty of everyone, as far as his means and influence permit, to support the work of these organisations which are helping refugees, in their efforts towards the relief of suffering and the building of a more brotherly world."

World Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations, World's Young Women's Christian Association, Caritas Internationalis, International Centre for Relief to Civilian Populations, International Committee of the Red Cross, World Council of Churches, World Student Relief, International Friends Service Committee, International Save the Children's Fund, Union O.S.E., Organisation for Child Care, Health and Hygiene among Jews. E.P.S. Geneva

UNITED STATESThe Federal Council of Churches and Human Rights

A statement on human rights was unanimously adopted by the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America (see E.P.S. No. 50).

Denouncing "the pattern of segregation" as "unnecessary and undesirable" and a violation of the "gospel of love and human brotherhood", the statement

Will the Refugee Find a New Home?

Representatives from the Executive Office of the United Nations, who were active in refugee work throughout the year, met on Friday, December 11, at a conference in London. Will the Refugee Find a New Home? This conference is a part of a series of meetings, which will continue for several weeks at Christmas to present the appeal for refugees on the national, regional and humanitarian levels. The text which follows was widely commented by each representative present.

"All over the world, there are millions of human beings who have been driven from their homes and who survive as refugees, in misery and destitution. The International Refugee Organization has taken over the responsibility for many categories of refugees, but the millions of the distress are seen that the international organizations whose names suggest relief, concerned particularly with the human character of the refugee problem, and making no distinction of race, religion or political opinion, feel obliged to make an urgent appeal to the conscience of the world in order that this tragic situation may find a speedy solution."

"The old should be enabled to end their days in peace, the children and young people to progress for the days ahead. Facilities maintained by the U.N. to provide and the opportunity, must be provided together; workers, whether manual or intellectual, should have the opportunity of placing themselves at the service of the community. The old must be cared for, the hungry fed, and those who are sick, clothed. In order to organize them by suffering, which in the past has been the result of a lack of humaneness must be rectified."

"This appeal is addressed to the countries through which refugees pass as well as to those in whom they finally settle. In the hope that nothing will be left undone to ensure to these refugees the rights to which they are entitled and to facilitate their return to normal family life."

"We are convinced that it is the duty of everyone, as far as the means and influence permit, to support the work of these organizations which are helping the refugees, in their efforts towards the relief of suffering and the ending of a more tragically world."

World Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations, World's Young Women's Christian Association, British International League for Relief to Civilian Populations, International Committee of the Red Cross, World Council of Churches, World Student Relief, International Students Service, International Save the Children's Fund, United Nations, Organization for United Nations Relief and Hygiene among others.

UNITED STATES

The Federal Council of Churches and Young People

A statement on human rights was unanimously adopted by the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America (see E.S.N. No. 20).

Denouncing "the practice of segregation" as "inhumanity and unchristianity" and a violation of the "spirit of love and human brotherhood," the statement

called upon the American Churches to work for the creation of a non-segregated society "as a proof of their sincerity".

Three general categories of "full opportunity" for which Christians should work and which are to apply to all people "regardless of race, colour, sex, birth, class or creed", were listed by the Council. These are; Full opportunity to participate in the economic resources of the community; full opportunity, on a non-segregated basis, to participate in the social and public life of the community; and full opportunity to participate in the political community.

The declaration went on to assert that the Churches, the State and individuals as well, have the responsibility for the observance of the requirements of human rights. Moreover, it added, "it is presumptuous for the State to assume that it can grant or deny fundamental rights".

"It is for the State to embody these rights in its own legal system and to ensure their observance in practice", the statement declared.

"It is for the Churches to encourage the State fully to recognise these rights in law, but also, since the Churches are under special obligation to obey God rather than man, they must go beyond the requirements of law and seek vigorously to realise these principles wherever they apply within their own fellowship; to support and to encourage their members in conscientious endeavour to achieve these ends in the community and nation; and to seek solutions in the spirit of Christian reconciliation.

"The Churches are likewise bound to offer a continual challenge to the conscience of the community and to seek to influence the government in its appropriate sphere to safeguard the rights of all".

Contained in a preamble to the Council statement was an outline of the basic human rights which the delegates said "are the due of every person". These are;

"Freedom of religion and conscience, including the right of all men to hold and change their faith, to express it in worship and practice, to teach and persuade others, and to decide on the religious education of their children.

"Freedom of speech, press, inquiry and study, including the expression of economic, political and social beliefs, with due regard to the protection of all slander and libel.

"Freedom from arbitrary arrests, police brutality, mob violence and intimidation."

E.P.S. Geneva

KOREA

Help to Refugees

Relief efforts are being organised by Protestant, Roman Catholic and other religious organisations in Seoul on behalf of an estimated 30,000 persons made homeless by the recent Communist uprising in southeast Korea. Pak Yun-Chin, a Buddhist, is chairman of the investigating group, which include delegates of the Christian Churches, the Korean Buddhist Central Administrative Office, the Yudo Sect General Office, and the Dai Chong and Chon Do religious organisations.

E.P.S. Geneva

ROUMANIAReopening of Russian Church in Bucharest

On Sunday November 21, 1948, the Russian Church in Bucharest was reopened, in the presence of the Minister of Religion Mr. Stanciu Stoian, Patriarch Justinian and several Orthodox bishops, a representative of the Soviet Embassy and other officials. A group of priests, headed by representatives of the Patriarch of Moscow, of the Bulgarian Church and of the Roumanian Church, officiated.

The representative of the Patriarch of Moscow, Bishop Pavel Statov, made a speech in which he said, among other things, that the important fact was that "the faithful of Slav origin are coming together and becoming brothers within the Church... Our Church sees the hand of the Lord in the fact that the U.S.S.R. together with the neighbouring democratic countries, has risen in defence of peace throughout the world..."

E.P.S.Geneva

CUBAJoint Theological Seminary

The Evangelical Seminary in Matanzas, Cuba, is now in its third year of existence. It has 19 students, young men and women, from four denominations.

The Methodist and Presbyterian Boards of Missions have contributed generously toward the establishment of the Seminary. The Cubans now feel they want to take their share in the responsibility, and so they set aside October 31st as "Cuban Seminary Day" in the Churches, having as one of their objectives the building of a chapel for the seminary.

Unfortunately, in the month of September, disaster overtook the town of Matanzas. A hurricane struck it on September 21, and the seminary suffered damage.

E.P.S.Geneva

ISRAELRussian Church Representative Installed in
Jerusalem

Archimandrite Leonide has been installed at Ain Karem, traditional birth-place of St John the Baptist, near Jerusalem, as the official representative of the Russian Orthodox Church in Israel. Archimandrite Leonide is the first church official appointed to office in Palestine by the Moscow Patriarchate since the Russian Revolution of 1917.

E.P.S.Geneva

SWEDENGeneral Synod of the Church of Sweden

The General Synod of the Church of Sweden, which since 1863 has been the organ through which the Church makes its representation to the State and which is convened by the King at least once every five years, met in Stockholm under the leadership of the Archbishop of Upsala Erling Eidem, from November 6 to December 8. Among the 63 bills put before the Synod, approval was given, among others, to the formation of a special commission of the Church to handle international church relations. The new commission will seek to increase contacts and fellowship between the Swedish Church and other Church bodies throughout the world and will be the channel of the Swedish Church towards the ecumenical movement and the World Council of Churches.

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Another bill adopted by the General Synod changed the constitution of the Synod in order to give laymen a greater voice in church affairs. The bill increased the number of delegates to the Synod from 60 to 99, of whom 56 will be laymen and 42 clergymen instead of 30 to 30 as before. This bill, which is considered as one of the most important measures to come before the Synod, was accepted by a 41 - 11 vote after lengthy and animated debate, during which supporters argued it would give the laity a greater incentive for active interest in church affairs, while opponents of the measure warned it might lead to the secularising of the Church.

E.P.S.Geneva

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Latest Church News

On October 16, the bishops of the Roman Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia issued a pastoral letter calling upon Roman Catholics to be faithful and obedient to their Church. The Catholic Church, runs the letter, is "alone the true Church", while the rest of the Churches in Czechoslovakia are described as "sects".

The Czechoslovak Church and the Orthodox Church in Czechoslovakia, which latter is now affiliated to the Moscow Patriarchate, have protested against this pastoral letter. The Protestant Churches have not made any statement on the matter. According to the complaint made by these two Churches, "there is no need to call specially upon the faithful to close their ranks", as there is no religious persecution today in Czechoslovakia. Under the constitution there is complete religious liberty, even church schools being permitted to carry on their work.

The Government too has broadcast and published statements accusing the Church of Rome, together with a number of priests of the Greek Catholic Church, which is united with Rome, of taking up an attitude inimical to the State. The Government Press, in its references to the Roman Catholic pastoral letter, mentions the protest noted above, but without naming the two Churches concerned.

The Youth News Sheet of the Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren "Bratrstvo", has had to cease publication, the prohibition to come into effect forthwith.

Ten of the twelve Baptist Churches in Slovakia have been closed by order of the State, but upon representations by leading personalities of various Churches they have been allowed to reopen. There have been for some time now eighteen new Lutheran parishes in Slovakia for Lutheran immigrants from Hungary, Roumania and Yugoslavia. At the same time, 43 new parishes of the Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren have been set up in the frontier areas of Czechoslovakia.

On November 17, the first seminary for the training of Orthodox clergy in Czechoslovakia was opened at Karlovy Vary. The chair was taken at the opening ceremony by Exarch Eleutherius of the Moscow Patriarchate, metropolitan of Prague. Patriarch Alexij of Moscow sent his blessings on this occasion. Up to now the Czech Orthodox clergy have had to be educated in Yugoslavia and Roumania, and since very recent times also in Leningrad, in Russia.

E.P.S. Geneva

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